

Fall 2018

The Promethean: Fall 2018

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THE Promethean

The College at Brockport
Honors College

Fall 2018



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Cover Image: Audrey Miller, "Force"

Student Spotlight

Emily Nestler

Emily Nestler is a senior in the Honors College for the 2018-2019 year, with a History major and a Criminal Justice minor. She is planning to graduate in Spring 2019, and has had a few experiences along the way that have set her up for future success beyond Brockport.

In the summer of 2017, Emily had the opportunity to study abroad in Germany, the Czech Republic, and Poland. She found the program through the Honors College, and decided to pursue it because of her love for travel and history. This study abroad program, titled Experiencing Culture and History in Central Europe, was run by Honors College Director Dr. Kowal and is loved by many students, current and former alike. Emily was able to transfer credits from her trip directly into her major. It also gave Emily the chance to become closer with Dr. Kowal and her Honors peers, as she was a transfer student in her sophomore year and didn't connect with Honors students or faculty through a first-year seminar.

More recently, Emily spent the summer of 2018 working as an intern in Washington D.C., at the International Center for Terrorism Studies. She was tasked with relaying up-to-date information and reports to her supervisor's superiors and she also worked on creating timelines for future projects, which will be implemented in coming years. Because Emily was so invested in this internship, she changed her Honors thesis topic to focus on a subject she had dealt with on a daily basis at the International Center for Terrorism Studies. Currently, Emily is working on a thesis about the emergence of Al Qaeda in Afghanistan. In the future Emily hopes to work in counter-terrorism or with Homeland Security. She believes that her internship and thesis have genuine real-world applications, and are integral to her future professional plans.

The Honors College is proud to have such an intelligent and well-rounded student graduating this coming Spring!

~ Catherine Esposito



Emily Nestler, a History major and a Criminal Justice minor.

Emily believes that her internship and thesis have genuine real-world applications, and are integral to her future professional plans.

Momchil Kyurkchiev

The Brockport Honors College has had many students who have gone on to successful careers. One such alumnus is Momchil Kyurkchiev, the co-founder and CEO of Leanplum, a mobile marketing platform that services companies like Grab, Tinder, and NBC. Momchil graduated from Brockport in 2007. During his time here, he was a triple major in Computer Science, Mathematics, and Computational Science.

Momchil came to America from his home of Bulgaria specifically to study at Brockport. Momchil recalls a woman who visited his school in Bulgaria and gave a presentation about Brockport that mentioned scholarship opportunities for students with high academic abilities, such as himself. He decided to apply and ultimately come to Brockport, and was surprised to find when he arrived that there were “another 29 Bulgarians starting in the same school year.” He came to find out that the recruiter had traveled to eight small towns like his and recruited Bulgarian students with great success. For Momchil, one of the most compelling things about Brockport was the opportunity it presented to earn scholarship money to defray the cost of attending college. Through scholarships, about “60 or 70 percent” of his education was covered. “If it wasn’t for the scholarships,” Momchil says, “I would not have been able to come.” In addition to this, he had all of his parents’ life savings – about \$2500 – and ultimately came to America with approximately \$5000 to supplement his cost of attendance.

During his time in the Honors College, Momchil appreciated the high caliber of academics. One of the things he enjoyed most about the Honors College was the fact that the professors were so “passionate about their fields.” For Momchil, it was extremely valuable to take classes with “people who are really inspiring... and students who are most interested in the subject.” One class that stood out to him was Early American History, taught by Dr. Paul Moyer. Although Momchil was already very interested in history, he says that this course and the clear expertise of the teacher made him so interested that he was “excited to read history books on a Friday night.” The smaller class sizes was another aspect of the Honors College that Momchil really valued—being with a focused group of like-minded students facilitated his learning and heightened his academic experience.

One of Brockport Honors students’ major academic experiences is the Honors Thesis. For his part, Momchil says that he can really see how he benefited from completing the thesis and how it guided him in many ways to his current career. Momchil’s project, completed

with the Computer Science department, focused on the development of a bookstore app that would help students on campus exchange textbooks. He describes it as “a combination of eBay and Craigslist” that could be developed to help students get textbooks not just on campus, but even internationally. Looking back on it, Momchil says that his thesis “gave [him] a lot of joy” and “helped [him] realize later on that... [he] wanted to be an entrepreneur.” This passion was something he carried with him during his time working at Google after graduation, and what ultimately brought him to the development of his own company, which has been

successfully operating for six years.

Outside of academics, Momchil was also able to bond with his fellow Honors students socially. By living in the Honors Hall, Momchil recalls, he and his fellow Honors students came to be “a family away from family.” Between living together and being in the same classes, Momchil says that members of the Honors College became “a very strong community” for him. This was reinforced by the fact that there was such a large

number of international students in the Honors College with whom Momchil could connect on a different level. As much as he valued his academics, “the community aspect was just as important” to Momchil and his adjustment to college.

In retrospect, Momchil’s greatest takeaway from his experience in the Honors College is how much it expanded his knowledge. “What the Honors program did for me was it expanded my field of view and enabled me to touch subjects that I wouldn’t normally touch.” Even while he received in-depth education in his fields of technology and mathematics, Momchil was able to experience other subjects that interested him—history, ethics, women’s issues, and other topics that otherwise he would never have known his passion about. He encourages students not just to take classes to obtain grades and ultimately a degree, but to “really dive in and take this... as ways to get inspired.”

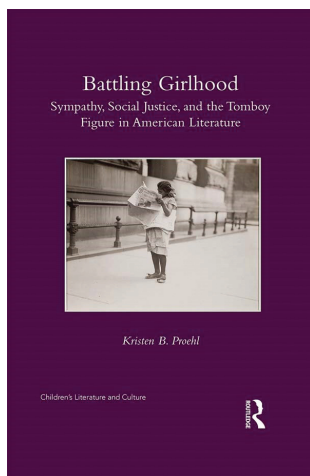
~ April Quattlebaum



Momchil Kyurkchiev, an Honors College alumnus and co-founder and CEO of Leanplum.

Dr. Kristen Proehl

Dr. Kristen Proehl is an assistant professor in the English Department at The College at Brockport, and has taught Honors students throughout her past five years at the college. This past summer, she published her first book, *Battling Girlhood: Sympathy, Social Justice, and the Tomboy Figure in American Literature* (Routledge). Proehl's book examines the emergence of the tomboy as a figure in American literature, from nineteenth-century sentimental novels, such as *Little Women*, to contemporary young adult fiction, including *The Hunger Games*.



She began work on the book as a graduate student, when she was writing her dissertation. She originally planned on researching anti-slavery literature, and even completed her master's thesis on *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe. As she began researching further, though, she found challenges coming up with original theses on the texts she was interested in writing about. She further realized that there was comparatively little research on tomboy characters in literature, and this sparked her final decision to trace the literary history of this

figure from its origin in nineteenth-century novels to the present. As her research progressed, Proehl found that her focus on sentimental novels brought her back to the research she had completed on anti-slavery literature. Her earlier work on *Uncle Tom's Cabin* ended up being particularly relevant.



Dr. Kristen Proehl, assistant professor in the English Department.

When writing it, Dr. Proehl was certain that her book would end with discussion of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, but she struggled with the introduction. She recommends the strategy of writing non-linearly, even beginning with the ending if the plan of attack is unclear. She credits dissertation writing groups as a major source of assistance in editing earlier drafts of her work, as well as various editors, advisers, and colleagues. Writing exchange among colleagues has also been helpful.

Dr. Proehl, who earned her PhD in American Studies from the College of William and Mary, appreciates interactions between the fields of history and literary studies, and her book features such intersections. *Battling Girlhood* is available for purchase at Barnes and Noble, Amazon.com, and elsewhere.

~ Catherine Esposito

Audrey Miller

My body of work, titled “Drawing from Strength”, stems from a lifelong interest in sport, the evolution of my work over a three-year timeframe, and various artistic influences such as classical sculpture and comic book illustrations. My work also stands to depict the female nude in a different light than it is traditionally painted under. “Drawing from Strength” is the culmination of my evolution as an artist at The College at Brockport.

As I was creating my pieces about runners, something happened to me that made me feel like I needed to change my focus. I started throwing javelin two years ago and this year I completely ended my running career to focus on learning other throwing events and getting stronger for javelin. This shift in my athletic focus caused me to have an identity crisis and I no longer knew what I wanted to do with my artwork. I didn't think I needed to completely cut running out of my artwork, but I needed to broaden my scope to be about more types of athletes. I started analyzing my old work...and I realized many things about myself as an artist. I knew for a fact that I love seeing the female body represented in art. I had subconsciously known this for a while, but I didn't know how to use that in my work. I started thinking about the different visual inspirations of mine. Instead of only focusing on artists that depict athletes, I broadened my scope so that I was thinking about outside influences that weren't directly about sport.... My two greatest inspirations in creating this body of work are classical sculpture, such as Michelangelo's David, and superhero comics.

—Audrey Miller, “Drawing from Strength” (Spring 2018)



Explosion, by Audrey Miller



Grit, by Audrey Miller

“Drawing from Strength” is the culmination of my evolution as an artist at The College at Brockport.



Audrey Miller (right) posing with her art at a May 2018 exhibit in the Tower Fine Art Center Gallery.

Christopher Carlson

Christopher Carlson is a senior in the Honors College, who is majoring in Biology, and minoring in both Chemistry and Pre-Professional Health. Christopher expects to graduate in December 2018, and intends to seek a career in phlebotomy and use that as a launching pad to potentially pursue a degree in dentistry.

Like many Honors College seniors, Christopher Carlson has been working hard on his Senior Honors Thesis over recent months, as he intends to graduate at the end of the Fall 2018 semester. However, Christopher's thesis topic is not one that many students would pursue. He chose to join the lab of his thesis director, Dr. Bernardo Ortega, after studying with him through the Summer Undergraduate Research program at The College at Brockport. They studied the effects of magnesium on Ulcerative Colitis. Ulcerative Colitis is a bowel disease that causes inflammation of the large intestine and tiny open sores, or ulcers. Chris's thesis is titled "The Effects of Dietary Magnesium Manipulation on the Gastrointestinal Microbiome of a Mouse Model of Ulcerative Colitis." In case you are not a Biology major, like Chris, he describes his project as the experimental manipulation of the amount of magnesium in the bowels of mice to see what the effects were on the mice's Ulcerative Colitis.

**The Honors College has pushed
Chris out of his comfort zone,
and has driven him to be his best.**

To test these effects, Chris first had to induce Ulcerative Colitis in the subject mice. Then he manipulated the amount of magnesium in their bowels. He said that the mice unfortunately did not survive the testing, but that they were treated humanely throughout the process.

What is most significant about Christopher's research is, of course, the results. After all of the testing, he found that by changing the magnesium levels in mice, he was able to affect and lessen the symptoms of Ulcerative Colitis. In addition, and, perhaps even more interestingly, he found that magnesium depletion also increases the bacteria in the blood of the gastrointestinal tract, where he said there should not be bacteria at all.



Christopher Carlson, an Honors College student majoring in Biology and minoring in Chemistry and Pre-Professional Health.

While Chris plans to stop his research there, it has laid the groundwork for his thesis director, Dr. Ortega, to continue researching and testing, specifically to find the types of bacteria in the blood of the gastrointestinal tract that are affected by magnesium manipulation. Christopher hopes that his research will lead to using magnesium supplements as treatment for Ulcerative Colitis and other serious inflammatory bowel diseases, like Crohn's Disease.

Chris will be writing a scientific article, which he is unsure if he will publish, for his final project. He said the article would focus mainly on explaining the procedures of his research. Chris explained that he believes his research for this project will help him with his future career. He said that usually in classes and associated labs, experimental results are already known, so it was special to be able to work through a research process without knowing what the answer would be in the end. In addition, he said that the Honors College has provided him with several unique experiences throughout his time at Brockport that have pushed him out of his comfort zone, and have driven him to be his best.

- Caitlyn Koch

The Honors College Moves to Brown!

The Honors College started the fall semester officially “all moved in” to the newly renovated Albert W. Brown building! While the move has been generally successful, there were a few bumps along the way. The new Honors College section of the Brown building comes with many new amenities, including a brand new lounge for students, new offices for the Honors College faculty and staff, and plenty of workspace for students. Located next to the Academic Success Center, the Honors College suite of offices offers students a quiet and unique space for many Honors activities. However, with a plethora of new amenities come a few new glitches.

As the semester began, the Honors lounge, with its key code access, was restricted to the hours of 8 am to 4 pm because the key-coded lock was not quite up and running yet. But since the first few weeks of the semester are fairly light for most students, there was still plenty of time to get work done, even without the possibility of late-night cramming in the Honors lounge! The new Honors lounge offers several computers, with the option to sit at a low computer, or to work at a higher computer positioned on a sit-stand desk. However, there were some technological glitches getting the computers up and running as well. The Honors College printer at first seemed to be having trouble fitting into its new home, for it periodically refused to communicate with several of the lounge’s computers. Its feud seemed to be with different computers at different times, sending the Honors College Secretary, Ms. Andrea Vella, rushing from her new office across the hall on various missions to fix the issue throughout the semester’s first month. Thankfully, the printer seems to be better adjusted now. For printers, like people, change can be hard!

The new Honors College suite features a nice seating area around the corner from the lounge with really comfortable chairs, colloquially called “womb chairs.” They make you feel like you are in your own little bubble, and give students a nice place to sit and read or do other work on the tables next to them. The tables themselves are pretty cool, too, because they come with outlets right on the tabletops so that students can plug their laptops and phones in as they work. Of course, in order to have the outlets in the tables function, they themselves must be plugged into an outlet. Unfortunately, when renovating the space, someone forgot to include wall outlets nearby where these tables would be set. However, that’s an easy fix and soon Honors students should be able to work in womb-like seclusion with their electronics charging nearby!

The Director of the Honors College, Dr. Kowal; the Associate Director, Dr. Busch; and the Honors secretary are all getting settled into their new offices, which are spacious and have plenty of shelving as well. Dr. Kowal especially loves her automated sit-stand desk, which has so far functioned without any glitches.

While the move has certainly not been as smooth as expected, the new space in the Albert W. Brown building is becoming very comfortable, and Honors College faculty and students are making the best of the challenges they face as they get everything squared away!

~ Caitlyn Koch



Honors Lounge provides computers in a variety of seating options.



“Womb chairs” provide a cozy, relaxing space to study or just chill out.

The Honors College suite offers students a quiet and unique space for many Honors activities.

THE Promethean



April Quattlebaum

April Quattlebaum is a third year student at The College at Brockport. She has been in the Honors College since her first year. April is an English major with a dual concentration in Literature and Adolescent Education and a minor in Music.



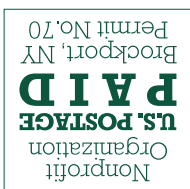
Catherine Esposito

Catherine Esposito is an English and Dance double major, and is a junior in the Honors College. She is excited to be writing for *The Promethean*, and enjoys sharing all the Honors College has to offer.



Caitlyn Koch

Caitlyn Koch is a senior in the Honors College. She is a dual major in English Literature and Finance with a minor in Political Science. She is Co-President of Honors Club, President of Circle K Club, and Vice President of the Swing Dance Society. She intends to pursue a law degree after graduating.



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